

INTERACTIONS

BERTILLE BAK, OLIVIA BOUDREAU,
LOUIS-PHILIPPE CÔTÉ,
RACHEL ECHENBERG, ERIN GEE,
NELSON HENRICKS, JOHN MASSEY,
THÉRÈSE MASTROIACOVO, ALANA RILEY,
JANA STERBAK, SHARIF WAKED,
HONG-KAI WANG

CURATOR: MÉLANIE RAINVILLE

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AUGUST 30 – OCTOBER 27, 2012



Alana Riley, *You Are The Work* (Asking Strangers to Sit Through John Baldessari's "Six Colorful Inside Jobs"), 2011. Video still. Courtesy of the artist and Joyce Yahouda Gallery, Montréal

WAYS OF THINKING

Ways of Thinking is designed for anyone interested in exploring contemporary art and its exhibition framework. It offers succinct and synthesized information on the exhibition's concept, the artists and the works featured. For the complete version of *Ways of Thinking* that includes bibliographic references, please visit our website: www.ellengallery.concordia.ca/2006/en/

Art historians and theorists have often noted a divide between contemporary artists and their publics. This divide is particularly noticeable when certain media figures make provocative statements that sometimes lead to controversy, but it remains just as important even when undiscussed in the public sphere. *Interactions* is an exploratory and collaborative exhibition that deals with the reception and interpretation of contemporary art, and investigates the artist-public rift that persists, despite the institutionalization and professionalization of the art field.

The exhibition, including several pieces from the Gallery's permanent collection, reveals the performative nature of art and underscores the interaction that takes place between artworks and the public. It aims to define the nature of this relationship by posing questions on the reception of the works: What is our relationship to works of contemporary art, and how do we interpret them? Are we able to grasp their meaning quickly and directly? What impact do they have on our way of understanding and reflecting on the world around us? What approaches, thought processes, and actions do these artworks lead us to? In order to raise these questions, the works are presented using curatorial strategies that deepen and stratify our examination of the reception and interpretation of contemporary art. With the goal of highlighting some of the parameters that define the gap between contemporary art and its publics, the exhibition also includes written and oral accounts by thirty collaborators as well as documentation on various controversies that have arisen in Québec and Canadian art milieus.

Interactions is a starting-point for a process of reflection that has until now remained relatively taboo and has mostly been made visible through controversies fueled by the media.

BERTILLE BAK

Safeguard emergency light system, 2010. Video installation, sound, 7 min. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Xippas

Bertille Bak’s work focuses on contemporary communities, habitat, and how people participate and involve themselves in cultural and social issues pertaining to their immediate environment. Her works reveal aspects of infiltration; people play themselves in their current situations. They focus on injustice and employ the video camera as a means of negotiating reality. Bak takes us to Thailand, to the Din Daeng district of Bangkok, where inhabitants of a modernist apartment block condemned to demolition find themselves victims of forced relocation.

- EXPLORE
- social engagement and art and the relationship that exists between the two;
 - how this relationship is communicated in this work.

OLIVIA BOUDREAU

Box, 2009. Video installation, sound, 22 hours. Collection of the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University. Purchase, 2011

Olivia Boudreau’s work is grounded in a reflection on the image, presence, intimacy, experience and perception. Using discreet installation devices, her video or film sequences present everyday scenes that evolve as entities with their own specific logic and temporality. *Box* is a long video work featuring a horse filmed in its stable for a period of 22 hours. Tension exists between what is visible and what is not. *Box* examines our relationship to time and our physical experience of its passing.

- EXPLORE
- Duration and its contribution to the meaning of this work;
 - the animal as a subject and/or object.

LOUIS-PHILIPPE CÔTÉ

Égérie, 2008–2011. *Transpolitique (L’abattoir virtuel comme machine de guerre)*, 2009. *Ton rêve d’anarchie*, 2011–2012. Oil on linen. Courtesy of the artist

Louis-Philippe Côté lives and works in Montreal. His ongoing series SCHIZO-SYSTÈME is a grim, hallucinatory look at non-localizable, hostile, inhospitable zones, in which avatars of power appear within a phantom reality. Each painting has a hallucinatory aspect, a ghostly timeframe emanating from another type of space and underlying a background of information. The function of SCHIZO-SYSTÈME is not to portray something real, but to construct what is visible beyond all locations.

- EXPLORE
- the subject of this artist’s paintings;
 - space, location, and setting.

RACHEL ECHENBERG

Riez III, 2012. Performance presented during the opening of *Interactions* on August 29. Produced with the support of the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery. Courtesy of the artist

Rachel Echenberg works in performance and video. Her interest in possibilities for active empathy has lead to artworks that highlight vulnerable, intimate and uncontrollable relationships. *Riez* has been

performed in several different versions, since 2008. It is an attempt to find an authentic reaction with a stranger by inviting this other to laugh with the artist for a timed minute. Although there is nothing being offered to laugh at or about within this controlled moment, there is the hope that each person will move, even briefly, from awkwardness towards a genuine shared interaction.

- EXPLORE
- roles and responsibilities in participatory performance;
 - the ephemeral artwork’s presence through its traces.

ERIN GEE

Formants, 2008. Fiberglass, plexiglas, hair, copper, wood, electronic components. Vocalists: Lynn Channing and Christina Willatt. Made with the support of Soil Digital Media Suite. Courtesy of the artist

Erin Gee lives and works in Montreal. Her work, encompassing video, performance, robotics and audio art, examines digital culture through human voices in electronic bodies. It is characterized by a distinctive use of historical referencing that enfolds past narratives into possible futures. *Formants* is an interactive audio sculpture that presents infinite possibilities for duets between good and evil based on human interaction: a musing on desire, vanity, absent bodies, morality, intimacy and touch in human-computer interactions.

- EXPLORE
- visitor engagement with an artwork;
 - how you either respond to or retreat from this work and why.

NELSON HENRICKS

Les sirènes, 2008. Video installation, sound, 16 min. Collection of the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University. Purchase, 2011

Nelson Henricks is a video artist, a writer, a musician and a curator. His work *The Sirens* is a sound and video installation incorporating 16mm, super 8 and video, as well as guitar amps and a “slide show”. In this work, Henricks explores themes that are ever-present in his practice: sound and music, textual elements, repetition and the body. He makes sound visible, revealing and looking at its effects and interactions; speakers pulse at low frequencies and guitars tremble under knives making sounds and sensations that linger in and outside of the physical.

- EXPLORE
- the artist’s use of sound and image;
 - the way in which text is present in this work.

JOHN MASSEY

Three Eyes, 1992. Silver prints, cardboard. Collection of the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University. Purchase, 1994

John Massey might be described as a sculptor, an installation artist, or a filmmaker. The position of observer and subject as one in a unified field is taken up by the artist in *Three Eyes*, a photographic work in three parts which moves from exterior gaze to interior gaze to the sensory allies of touch and vision. These photographs underline the relationship between the public and artworks echoing the way in which art can capture our gaze, one of the most powerful tools of consciousness. Beyond vision, this artwork evokes

the role of sight, and how art can encourage the viewer’s cognitive potential through vision.

- EXPLORE
- the gaze;
 - the position of the observer in relation to the elements of this work.

THÉRÈSE MASTROIACOVO

Art Now (L’Art en Flandre, Aujourd’hui/Art in Flanders, Now, 1992), 2006; *Art Now (The Arts under Socialism, Being a Lecture Given to the Fabian Society with a Postscript on What the Government Should Do for the Arts Here and Now*, 1947), 2006; *Art Now (L’art d’aujourd’hui et son public*, 1967), 2007; *Art Now (Montréal Painting Now = Peinture montréalaise actuelle*, 1982), 2007; *Art Now (Spanish Art Now*, 1966), 2007; *Art Now (To Be Continued: An Exhibition of the Museum Collection, Now and in Prospect*, 1960), 2007; *Art Now (Art Now*, 2005), 2008; *Art Now (Art Futures: Student Art Now*, 1983), 2009; *Art Now (Art Now: An Introduction to the Theory of Modern Painting and Sculpture*, 1933), 2010; *Art Now (Avant-Garde and After: Rethinking Art Now*, 1995), 2010. Graphite on paper. Collection of the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University. Purchase, 2011

Thérèse Mastroiacovo’s art practice has embraced a variety of mediums including video, sound, installation, photography, sculpture, drawing, and performance. Her work is about art as an idea and the artistic process as methodology. It is about the precarious relationship art has to its own definition. Each drawing in the series *Art Now* uses the cover of an existing book or catalogue published within the last sixty years that contains in its title the words *art* and *now*.

- EXPLORE
- drawing as a means of copying a mechanically reproduced image;
 - the idea of “now” that is put forward by this work.

ALANA RILEY

You Are The Work (Asking Strangers to Sit Through John Baldessari’s “Six Colorful Inside Jobs”), 2011. Video, 32 min. Courtesy of the artist and Joyce Yahouda Gallery, Montréal

Alana Riley is a photo/video-based artist and freelance photographer living in Montreal. In making this work, she created online postings seeking participants for a video project; explained that the willing participants would form an audience and that they would be videotaped while watching a video by the artist John Baldessari. Participants could respond or interact however they wished. She offered a 30-min. studio portrait session in exchange for their time.

- EXPLORE
- what constitutes watching;
 - the way in which this artist makes reference to another artist’s work.

JANA STERBAK

Artist as Combustible, 1986. Colour photograph. Collection of the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University. Purchase – Special Purchase Assistance Grant, Canada Council for the Arts, 2002

Much of Jana Sterbak’s artistic production centres around themes of power, control, seduction, sexuality, and transcending physicality via technology. In *Artist as Combustible*, the artist’s head appears to have been set on fire in a flash combustion. Her body appears and disappears against

a dark background with the glare of a flame shining from her head. Sterbak’s body is engaged in an incendiary, luminous act.

- EXPLORE
- time, chance, and reality;
 - the body and the self.

SHARIF WAKED

To Be Continued, 2009. Video installation, sound, 41 min. 33 sec. Courtesy of the artist

Sharif Waked creates films, installations, and paintings that explore the complicated landscape of contemporary politics and current events. In *To Be Continued*, Waked employs the now familiar media image of a suicide bomber’s last broadcast. His protagonist reads extended excerpts from *One Thousand and One Nights*, thus avoiding a horrific denouement. This carefully staged reading mirrors the origin of the tales themselves, in which Scheherazade narrates one gripping tale after another to King Shahrayar in order to save herself and her tribe from execution.

- EXPLORE
- the types of imagery that are present in this work and its meanings;
 - the artist’s use of narrative.

HONG-KAI WANG

Music While We Work, 2011. Double channel video installation, sound. 39 min. 15 sec. Courtesy of the artist
Music While We Work (Making Of), 2011. Video, sound. 31 min. 57 sec. Courtesy of the artist

Born in Yunlin, Taiwan, Hong-Kai Wang received a BA in Political Science from National Taiwan University,Taipei, and an MA in Media Studies from The New School, New York. Her work encompasses interventions, performance, performative workshops, and sound and video installations. It presents a networked excavation of social memory embedded in listening and an exploration of sound as a form of perceptual, cognitive organization and addresses the political questions of relationship and harmony.

- EXPLORE
- personal history and aural culture;
 - the relationships revealed in this work between what is shown and what is heard.

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